



SOROPTIMIST HOUSE OF HOPE

P.O. Box 1055, Desert Hot Springs CA 92240

September 13, 2011

Mr. Michael Cunningham, Acting Director
Mr. Dave Nielsen, Deputy Director
California Department of Alcohol and Drug Programs (ADP)
1700 K Street
Sacramento, CA 95811

Re: Comments on Elimination of ADP via Merger With Another State Department

Dear Director Cunningham and Deputy Director Nielsen:

Soroptimist House of Hope sincerely appreciates the opportunity provided by you at the public Stakeholders meeting to discuss the elimination of ADP and the subsequent invitation to submit written commentary regarding this important issue.

We understand that Governor Brown's Administration says their long-term goal is to provide services more efficiently and at less cost without a reduction in services.

We are currently in opposition to the proposed elimination of ADP. This position could change if a valid case for eliminating ADP is made. We are of the opinion that this is not the case at this time and needs further study to explain the rationale of said proposal.

While we agree with the Governor's goals of providing efficient and cost-effective services, elimination of ADP should be suspended until the State can provide a defensible socioeconomic cost-benefit analysis. It is frightening to think of eliminating ADP before completing this vital analysis. It very well could end up raising costs and severely weakening programs which in turn pose a very real threat to the health and well being of millions of Californians.

Soroptimist House of Hope also supports the tremendous value in maintaining ADP as a stand-alone entity with full Departmental status. The AOD field is small compared to most other Departments. If ADP is eliminated our system of specialized counselors and programs could easily be eliminated because if AOD is put into a much bigger bureaucracy, AOD clients will be lost in the system dominated by physicians, hospitals and primary care clinics. We would recommend ADP be given the respect and voice that is needed to serve our specialized population. We can talk about integrated care all day long but if we are buried under continued transition no one gets the help and the very reason we are in business - the clients suffering from the disease of alcohol and drug addiction - will be buried as well.

There is a very real danger of losing the importance of our mission should AOD be merged into a "mega" department such as Mental Health. AOD would receive minimal attention at the Director level and would probably

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become even more inferior during future budget cycles. Our field is much too important to receive "also-ran" consideration. Too many people die from their addictions. Too many people are already in prisons because of them. Nationally, the economic cost of addiction is at least \$200 billion dollars every year. Government programs for AOD should be strengthened, not cut down. Eliminating the Department's status is exactly like cutting it down.

Soroptimist House of Hope wants to remain involved in the discussion as you proceed. Until then, we will continue to believe that the risks of eliminating the Department far outweigh the presumed benefits, both in terms of tax dollars and in terms of human lives. We urge you to fully analyze the cost savings and efficiencies to be gained via eliminating ADP.

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

Cindy "Oma" Gray, CAS
Executive Director,
Soroptimist House of Hope, Inc.
CAARR Board of Directors

/cg

Cc: SHOH Board of Directors

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